

Bamberg, Aviano top '04 Toppers

BY CHARLIE COON

Stars and Stripes

HEIDELBERG, Germany — One day last December, Louis Gasper was chasing a girl at the teen center at Aviano Air Base, Italy, when he stumbled into the auditions for "Grease."

The director, Kim Carr, took one look at the boy and saw her leading man.

"She told me that if I could sing, I'm in," Gasper said. "She literally pulled me in from off the streets."

Gasper took home one of 72 Toppers awarded Saturday night at the annual U.S. Army Europe Tournament of Plays ceremony at the Village Pavilion ballroom at Patrick Henry Village.

Top winners were "Honk," by the Stable Theatre of Bamberg, with eight awards, followed by "The Secret Garden" by the Darmstadt Performing Arts Center and Aviano's "Grease," which each won six Toppers — the Tournament of Plays' version of the Oscars.

"Honk," a modern version of the Hans Christian Andersen's "The Ugly Duckling," won for best musical; "The Lilies of the

Field" by Wiesbaden's Amelia Earhart Playhouse won for best comedy; and "Another Antigone" by Giessen's The Keller Theatre won for best drama.

Gasper was just 17, living alone in a two-room apartment near Aviano and "going nowhere" when he was roped into the role of Danny Zuko, the greaser made famous by John Travolta in the movie version of "Grease."

"I had no direction, absolutely none," said Gasper, now 18 and a senior at Aviano High School. "Now I want to go apply myself and do something with my life."

Gasper's mother is a Lockheed-Martin retiree who lives several hours' drive south of Aviano. His father lives in Utah. Gasper attends Aviano High School because it is the closest American school to his mother's home.

Carr and her husband, Army Staff Sgt. Dan Carr, the show's stage designer, took Gasper under their wing after the youngster got involved with "Grease."

"We saw a good-looking kid who with a little help would make a foundation for himself," Dan Carr said. "And he has."

Twenty-five productions, the most ever, were entered in this



PHOTOS BY CHARLIE COON/Stars and Stripes

From left, Senior Airman Nicholas Kurtz, Airman 1st Class Josh Keleher, Louis Gasper and David Vega from Aviano Air Base, Italy, pose Saturday after winning for best chorus or ensemble in a musical at the annual Tournament of Plays ceremony in Heidelberg, Germany. The ensemble, portraying the T-Birds in "Grease" at the Aviano Community Theatre, also included Air Force Staff Sgt. Chris Diamond.

year's competition, representing 20 U.S. military communities in Germany, England, Belgium and Italy. Judging was done by three industry professionals hired by USAREUR to view and critique the shows, according to USAREUR entertainment director Jim Sohre.

The ballroom was overflowing with more than 600 guests, and some people had to be seated in the upstairs balcony.

They helped themselves to a buffet dinner before the three-hour show, and during the show they drank wine, beer and

soft drinks as performers performed and awards were announced. Most of the men were dressed in suits or tuxedos while the women wore gowns.

The show began when the 23-member Tournament Singers and Band whipped through a medley of Broadway tunes they called "28 Songs in 14 Minutes." The pace stayed brisk as acceptance speeches were not allowed; winners came onto the stage, received their trophy and returned to their tables to the hugs and kisses of their parties.

Gasper said he was never motivated by math, science or En-

glish, and he didn't know he could sing until Kim Carr asked him to try out for the show. Five months later, after helping cast and crew bring "Grease" to life, Gasper said his own life is more in focus.

Gasper said he wants to attend the Florida School of the Arts, which is where the Carrs went to college to study theater.

"Every single day we were in there [rehearsing] for six hours until we got it down perfectly," Gasper said. "This brought something out of me that I didn't know I had."

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Tournament of Plays award winners

The following awards were presented at the U.S. Army Europe's annual Tournament of Plays ceremony. Winners from Germany unless otherwise noted:

Technical

Makeup, comedy — CarolAnn Bixler and Crystal Riehle, RAF Alconbury, England, "Arsenic and Old Lace"
 Makeup, musical — Paula Fairbrother, Ramstein, "Pinocchio"
 Makeup, drama — Mannheim, "Steel Magnolias"
 Hair and wig design — Spangdahlem, "Censored: On Final Approach"
 Costume design, comedy — Jennifer Volmer, Stuttgart, "Come Blow Your Horn"
 Costumes, musical — Janet Austin, Bamberg, "Honk"
 Costume design, drama — Elle Shepard, Darmstadt, "The Secret Garden"
 Sound design, comedy — Moritz Essinger, Giessen, "Murder by Misadventure"
 Sound design, musical — Alasio, Aviano, Italy, "Grease"
 Sound design, drama — Sgt. Kevin Redgate, SHAPE, Belgium, "The Glass Menagerie"
 Choreography — Kristina Purpura and BJ Bernet, Aviano, "Grease"
 Exceptional volunteer — Kirsten Hecke, Giessen
 Lighting design, comedy — Holger Schroeder, Stuttgart, "Come Blow Your Horn"
 Lighting design, musical — Jack Austin, Manuela Goller, Stephanie Caswell and Maddy Austin, Bamberg, "Honk"
 Lighting design, drama — Michael Hecke, Giessen, "Another Antigone"
 House management — Wiesbaden, "The Lilies of the Field"
 Original score — Graig Hines and Ramona Stendardi, Vicenza, Italy, "African Tales"
 Stage properties and dressing, comedy — Eric Danzeiser, Giessen, "Murder by Misadventure"
 Stage properties and dressing, musical — Staff Sgt. Dan Carr, Aviano, "Grease"
 Stage properties and dressing, drama — Joan Scheide, SHAPE, "The Glass Menagerie"
 Scene painting — Michael Rhodes, SHAPE, "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers"
 Original mask design — Karen Ebert, Vicenza, "African Tales"
 Best program — Katherine Anselmo-Henke, Kitzingen, "Plaza Suite"
 Best poster — Darmstadt, "The Secret Garden"
 Set design, comedy — Eric Robinson, Wiesbaden, "The Lilies of the Field"
 Set design, musical — Brigitte Posley, Bamberg, "Honk"
 Set design, drama — William Morehead, Darmstadt, "The Secret Garden"
 Instrumentalist — Sgt. Becky Rabenseifner, Bamberg, "Honk"
 Keyboard accompanist — Alan Buxkemper, Stuttgart, "December Songs"
 Orchestra — Hanau, "Miss Saigon"
 Musical director — Noranne Kocher, Aviano, "Grease"
 Stage manager, comedy — Elina Kotlyar, Kitzingen, "Plaza Suite"
 Stage manager, musical — Tawnysha Lynch, Hanau, "Miss Saigon"
 Stage manager, drama — Judith Harvin, Spangdahlem, "Censored: On Final Approach"
 Technical director, comedy — Danny Vaughn and Paul Aciri, Garmisch, "Three Bags Full"
 Technical director, musical — William Hauserman, Hanau, "Miss Saigon"
 Technical director, drama — Maj. Jerry Glattfeld, Kaiserslautern, "A Raisin in the Sun"

Acting and directing

Military performance in a play — Petty Officer 1st Class Joseph Reynolds, Alconbury, "Arsenic and Old Lace"
 Military performance, musical — 1st Lt. Anne Henderson, Bamberg, "Honk"
 Female youth performance — Madeline Smith, Darmstadt, "The Secret Garden"
 Male youth performance — Peter Rydzynski, Darmstadt, "The Secret Garden"
 Debut performance in a play — Capt. Felicia R. Moore, Kaiserslautern, "A Raisin in the Sun"
 Debut performance, musical — Louis Gasper, Aviano, "Grease"
 Chorus member — (tie) Kim Barreto, Hanau, "Miss Saigon" and Tim Morse, Vilsack, "Guys and Dolls"
 Ensemble, comedy — Vicenza, "African Tales"
 Chorus or ensemble, musical — The T-Birds: Louis Gasper, Senior Airman Nicholas Kurtz, Airman 1st Class Josh Keleher, Staff Sgt. Chris Diamond and David Vega, Aviano, "Grease"
 Best ensemble, drama — Giessen, "Another Antigone"
 Actress in minor role, comedy — Anastasia Zorin, Garmisch, "Three Bags Full"
 Actor in minor role, comedy — Tim McMahon, Garmisch, "Three Bags Full"
 Supporting actress, comedy — Tami McNeely, Stuttgart, "Come Blow Your Horn"
 Supporting actor, comedy — Carlos Cole Naples, Wiesbaden, "The Lilies of the Field"
 Actress, comedy — Katherine Anselmo-Henke, Kitzingen, "Plaza Suite"
 Actor, comedy — Capt. Peter Dannenberg, Stuttgart, "Come Blow Your Horn"
 Actress in minor role, musical — Ashleigh Bragg, Bamberg, "Honk"
 Actor in minor role, musical — (tie) Spc. Josh Lang, Ansbach, "Gypsy" and Airman 1st Class Ryan Matasovsky, Ramstein, "Pinocchio"
 Supporting actress, musical — Maria Yost, Vilsack, "Guys and Dolls"
 Supporting actor, musical — Maj. George Linka, Vilsack, "Guys and Dolls"
 Actress, musical — (tie) Keyle Kosowsky, Hanau, "Miss Saigon" and Kalei Anderson, SHAPE, "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers"
 Actor, musical — Senior Airman Phillip Wentz, Ramstein, "Pinocchio"
 Actress in minor role, drama — Capt. Leona Schuh, Kaiserslautern, "A Raisin in the Sun"
 Actor in minor role, drama — Michael Magar, Darmstadt, "The Secret Garden"
 Supporting actress, drama — Bobbie Lording, Wiesbaden, "The Elephant Man"
 Supporting actor, drama — Capt. Ben Grimes, Heidelberg, "Proof"
 Actress, drama — Melanie Marcec, Mannheim, "Steel Magnolias"
 Actor, drama — J. Lee Sweet, Kaiserslautern, "A Raisin in the Sun"
 Director, comedy — Dr. Felicity Thoe, Wiesbaden, "The Lilies of the Field"
 Director, musical — Stephanie Caswell, Bamberg, "Honk"
 Director, drama — Mark Williams, Giessen, "Another Antigone"

Other

Best comedy — Wiesbaden, "The Lilies of the Field"
 Best musical — Bamberg, "Honk"
 Best drama — Giessen, "Another Antigone"
 Outstanding Leadership Award — Frank Lewandowski



Vic Phillipson, a former Morale, Welfare and Recreation entertainment director at Giessen and Heidelberg, was given the James T. Martin Award for his contributions to Army community theaters.